

# THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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## Renewing Faith in Democracy

Normally, my answer to Dr. Forster's question in his Presidential message would be the first one suggests: that we can best renew and deepen faith in democracy by making English "mean all it means to students as human beings." It is our job all the time. To renew faith in democracy ultimately means to renew faith in man, for him as a whole individual personality must be respected, regardless of wealth, status, or brains. If we lead our students freely to see in literature the humanity of human beings in many various, and also the universal vision of man at his best, they need not fear their willing renunciation of democracy.

The generalization "to make English mean all it can to students as human beings" is too vague to be of much use. It must be seen concretely in terms of what we actually do in our teaching; it must be the object of constant renewal even in normal times; and especially in these days the terms "English," "students," and "humanity" need to be honestly inspected. "Meaning" can have real meaning only in relation to life as our students know it. "Students" must be understood in terms of the men and women in which students appear in literature. "Human beings" is a phrase worth looking at a second time when patterns of human nature (which is hard to separate from human nature) are being fully revised.

It is not merely that we may have special obligations in this emergency, like everybody else. It seems fairly clear already that we have reached the end of the line and the beginning of something else, and that no matter how the war may develop, college English will reflect the difference. Dr. Forster in his thoughtful message suggests a study of kinds of courses, especially in the first years. Such a study is long overdue, but it should not, I think, be confined to the first two years of college. Throughout our English programs we are still attached to the same kind of courses which have long use have come to seem stale. I need not recite the various forms of organization we have found convenient. Undoubtedly there is merit in them, but perhaps there could profitably be re-orientation on this upperclass level.

There is one type of course which could be used more widely, which might point in the direction Dr. Forster has in mind. That is an approach to literature through the emotional, intellectual, moral, from which literature takes

## The Scholar Spider

Serene he hatches out his paral-  
lels:  
Chaucer read this and knew a man  
like that;  
Poor Poe was not the first to ring  
the Bells;  
Hamlet was lean till Burbage made  
him fat.  
So spider-like he weaves his web.  
He knows  
Sources and influences, loves and  
wars;  
And thus by delicate woofs his  
salary grows.  
His reputation as a scholar soars.

much of its meaning, tone, and colour: the naturalistic, humanistic, marxist, romantic, and so forth.

The material of such a course should cut across types and periods. It should include poems, plays, fiction, and essays which are good reading in themselves and which can also be used to demonstrate different ways of looking at experience. The investigation should proceed from particular to general. Such a study would involve reading the lines and also reading between the lines to detect basic assumptions which the author may not have consciously formulated. Among other things, it would lead to observation of how the writer's dominant attitudes shape his view of himself, of other men, of society as a whole, and of the universe; how they influence his choice of material and his interpretation of character; in fact, his whole set of values. The presentation within a single course of writers who see things very differently makes it possible to exhibit them more clearly in relation to each other.

In such a course the emphasis can be put on any one of a number of interests, including purely literary criticism; but one interest which cannot be ignored is man's conception of himself and his attitude to other men. And since my definition of democracy includes a recognizable conception of man's nature and of the way men should live together, the road clearly leads in the direction Dr. Forster has indicated. It is not a matter of turning literature into philosophy or politics, but simply of reading literature as deeply as possible.

This kind of material and method could be used in the sophomore year with simplified subject matter; but my own experience for several years with a course which I call *Ideas and Attitudes* suggests that better results will be got with students who have already done a fair amount of reading on an adult level.

Strang Lawson,  
Colgate University.

Only when indigestion murders  
sleep  
Rise momentary doubts. He won-  
ders why,  
Though words of genius unto gen-  
ius leap  
All bounds and soar and fuse and  
fire the sky.  
He lingers on in dusty stacks and  
dim,  
The deathless classics have no  
word for him.

W. L. Werner,  
State College, Pa.

## CEA Committees

In an earlier issue the appointment was announced of Irving L. Churchill, Coe College, Ia., as Chairman of the Program Committee for the annual meeting in Indianapolis next December. President Foerster now announces appointment of other members of that committee: J. Gordon Eaker, Kansas State Teachers College; Arthur P. Hudson, University of North Carolina; Edith C. Johnson, Wellesley College; Henry C. F. Staunton, Notre Dame University.

Following action of an earlier annual meeting, asking for a committee to define the objectives of the College English Association, and to submit this definition to the membership for approval, President Foerster called the following committee which met in New York City, April 17: Norman Foerster, Chairman; William C. DeVane, Yale University; Elizabeth Manwaring, Wellesley College; Howard Lowry, Princeton University; Burgess Johnson, Union College. After profitable discussion the Committee agreed to draw up during the summer a statement of the purposes of CEA, and the arguments which justify its continued independent existence. These will be published in the October *News Letter*.

Membership in the College English Association is open to anyone who conducts undergraduate English courses in four-year colleges of recognized standing, and to anyone who has so taught; also to teachers of English in Junior Colleges (upon the understanding that such teachers may by action of the Association be placed in a special class). Anyone thus qualified becomes a member after sending the annual dues of \$2.00 to the Treasurer, W. R. Richardson, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

## English at The Naval Academy

The common cry in an English course, as in any other, is, "We need more time!" Yet I believe, given more time, the instructor would clamor for still more. The course in English at the United States Naval Academy offers no exception to this rule; but it must adapt itself to the time it has, and, in the common naval phrase, "accomplish its mission."

The Naval Academy receives midshipman from all the states in the Union, and presumably from all schools of thought in the field of secondary education, as well as from all social, cultural, regional, and occupational surroundings and experiences. Upon so heterogeneous, even motley, a preparation, we must base our program. Certain unpromising material is weeded out by entrance examinations designed to measure the power and equipment of the candidate to pursue and complete the Naval Academy course and to join the Fleet, equipped to start his career as a junior officer able to do his work and to advance in value to the Navy in learning both by experience and by constant study. Upon such varied material and with so advanced an aim, we must operate in the least possible time. The curriculum of the Naval Academy is steadily becoming fuller in the professional subjects, for physics, chemistry, steam and electrical engineering are rapidly expanding fields of learning, and midshipmen must be well grounded in the fundamentals. The need for training in English is recognized; it does not diminish in importance; but the pressure brought upon the course by other departments whose work is necessarily expanding is so great as to call for repeated and reiterated preachments of our aim and function.

The English course at the Naval Academy has a single aim in common with all the other departments—the making of an efficient officer. Such an officer must be able to communicate orders to his men briefly and clearly; he must be able to explain to them succinctly and exactly what his wishes are and how certain tasks are to be accomplished. He must submit reports of occurrences or situations to his commanding officer or to the Navy Department. These reports must be "curt, clear, concise"; they must in the least possible space paint a full and exact picture of all essentials in the matter. It is obvious that sound organization and exact expression are necessary if the circumstances on a ship in Hawaii or in the Mediterranean are to be fully understood by an officer at a

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*Emery & Kierzen*  
MACMILLAN NEW YORK

NEW YORK



## Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina CEA

The annual Spring Meeting of the Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina Regional Group of the College English Association was held on Saturday, 19th April at Duke University. Fifty members, twice the number that met at the first meeting last autumn, and several guests were present. In all, twenty colleges and universities were represented.

Professor George R. Coffman of the University of North Carolina spoke informally on our relationship to other regional and national societies. He stressed the value of regional groups and noted as a healthy sign the flourishing South Atlantic branch of the M.L.A. The teaching of English is a house of many mansions, and we have constantly with us the problem of keeping the essence of the liberal arts while adapting ourselves to changing conditions. The word "humanities" may have lost much of its meaning, but an interest in "humane letters," in the full sense of the term, should still be demanded of the teacher. To this end a spirit of friendly cooperation among societies is essential.

The three talks which followed during the morning bore on the relation in teaching of literary values and emergency measures. Professor J. L. Baughan of the University of Virginia urged teachers of English not to give way to a sense of uselessness. Their unique task is to discuss great books, thus fortifying minds. They should not attempt to cope with complex questions, with Spengler or Pareto, nor should they compete with the press, the news broadcast or the motion picture. He concluded his "Plea for Balance" by mentioning a copy of *Joseph Andrews*, inscribed "Argonne Forest, 1918," and given him by an English officer who had read it "after contemplating his firing orders and the next days' murders, in order to get away from the crudeness of it all."

Speaking on "Education for Defense," Professor J. H. Jackson of William and Mary sounded a warning against materialism in this hour, against the bullying horde, and a chamber-of-commerce type of competition. We must reaffirm the liberalizing influence of education as we repudiate culture itself. What may English teachers do to further defense? "Nothing they have not been doing unless they have not been doing their job well." Professor Jackson made four recommendations as a frame for discussion: (1) to return to fundamentals and, especially, to teach students to speak the vernacular with reasonable force and accuracy (2) to keep other activities from interfering with essential work (3) to train the mind, and (4) to advocate, as an eminently practical expedient, the teaching of German and Italian to all students.

Professor Newman Ivey White of Duke University talked on "Faculty Efforts Toward National Unity." He clearly explained the work of the Duke Defense Council and

its several committees. The Council is committed to serving purely American ends regardless of whether or not war is involved. And the purpose of its published articles is to give definite and needed information. Professor White observed that democracy was not a state of unity but a welter of opinions, and that the struggle for unity on a given issue always arose from the need to meet some greater crises. The teacher is also a citizen and may determine what emphases are proper in the classroom. The tendency today to stress certain aspects of literature more than normally is natural, and, in this exercise, true purposes need not be sacrificed or subverted. For, in spite of Hazlitt's dictum, literature is not all on the side of the tyrants.

Presiding at the luncheon, Professor Frank C. Brown, Chairman of the Duke English Department, welcomed the members and their guests. Afterwards, ballads, accompanied by scholarly annotations and a guitar, were sung in delightful and informal fashion by Professor Fletcher Collins and Mrs. Collins of Elon College. These were English ballads, "Edward," "Cockle Shells" etc., in their Piedmont versions as discovered by Professor Collins.

In the afternoon Professor Kenneth Kurtz gave a most interesting and considered account of Black Mountain College as an experiment in cooperative education. This college, which is literally building itself and is free from the control of either president or trustee, is owned by its faculty of twenty who share their daily living with some eighty students. A board of fellows elected from the faculty with a third of its members retired each year acts in an advisory capacity. The fine arts, practical labor and good writing are matters of emphasis throughout; and academic achievement is measured wholly by visiting examiners.

At the morning session Professor Nathan Starr of Chapel Hill introduced the speakers and led the discussion. The meeting concluded with a brief business session with President J. I. Bennett of Sweet Briar College in the chair. He raised a question of policy with regard to regional dues. It was voted to assess each member one dollar for the fiscal year of January thru December. The following new officers were chosen:

President, Professor William M. Blackburn, Duke University; Vice President, Professor Fraser Neiman, College of William and Mary; Secretary and Treasurer, Professor Mary Parmenter, Hollins College.

Two observations, by way of summarizing the speeches, the discussion and the conversation, may be set down without gloss. One is the satisfaction, generally expressed, with the regional meeting, filling as it does, a great want simply by providing a means of getting together. The other is the high value of the meeting in bringing to the surface the common awareness of our present responsibility.

J. D. Bennett, Pres.  
Caroline S. Lutz, Sec'y.

## New England Section

The Spring Meeting of the New England Section of the CEA was held on Friday and Saturday, April 18 and 19 at the University of New Hampshire. The following officers were elected for the coming year. President, Ralph P. Boas, Wheaton College; Vice President, Katherine C. Balderston, Wellesley College; Secretary-Treasurer, Donald C. Brodine, Tufts College.

Advisory Board: 3-year term, F. Cudworth Flint, Dartmouth; Katherine Hornbeck, Smith College; George Sherborn, Harvard. 2-year term: Milton Ellis, University of Maine; Robert M. Gay, Simmons College; Randall Stewart, Brown University. 1-year term: James L. Brennan, Holy Cross; Evelyn Boynton, Colby Jr. College; Frederick L. Pottle, Yale University.

A constitution was adopted, which is reprinted in full, following this report.

Seventy-five members were in attendance, and lively discussion followed each of the papers, presented according to the following program:

### FRIDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING, APRIL 18

Registration: Lobby, Murkland Hall.

4:45 Preliminary Announcements, Chairman Scudedr.

5:00 "Freshman English at Yale," R. W. Short, Yale University. Discussion led by Sharon Brown, Brown University.

7:00 Informal Dinner: Cafeteria Room, University Commons (Tickets 75c at the registration table).

8:00 "Archbishop Wulfstan as Prime Minister in Eleventh Century England," Dorothy Bethurun, Connecticut College.

8:30 "The Structure of Whitman's Poetry," F. O. Mathiessen, Harvard University.

### SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 19

Breakfast, Cafeteria service: University Commons, open 7:00-8:45 a.m.

8:45 Business Meeting. Election of officers and adoption of constitution.

9:30 Round Table. "The Course in Creative Writing." Discussion led by L. J. Kapstein, Brown University, and Carroll S. Towle, University of New Hampshire.

10:30 Round Table. The members of the group will discuss informally the following question: "What are the best means for arousing in our students a sense of and respect for the past?" Robert M. Gay, Simmons College, will act as moderator.

1:30 "Why Teach Contemporary Literature?" Fred B. Millett, Wesleyan University.

12:30 Luncheon: Cafeteria Room, University Commons.

## Constitution of the New England Section of CEA

Sec. 1 The name of this association shall be the New England Section of the College English Association.

### ARTICLE II: Object

Sec. 1 The object of this group shall be in general to further the aims of the national body of the College English Association by sponsoring semi-annual conferences for the discussion of problems and topics relating to the teaching of English to college undergraduates.

### ARTICLE III: Membership

Sec. 1 Membership shall be of two kinds: active and associate. Both active and associate members shall be entitled to vote and hold office.

Sec. 2 Active members are those who are members of the national body of the College English Association.

Sec. 3 Associate members are those English teachers, active or retired, in New England universities, colleges, and junior colleges who register at the conferences of the New England Section but are not members of the national body.

### ARTICLE IV: Officers

Sec. 1 The officers of the New England Section shall be a president, a vice-president, and a secretary-treasurer.

Sec. 2 The duties of the officers shall be such as are implied by their respective titles.

Sec. 3 All officers shall be elected by ballot at the annual Spring meeting and continue in office one year; or until their successors are elected.

Sec. 4 The regular term of office of all officers shall commence at the adjournment of the annual meeting at which they are elected.

### ARTICLE V: Advisory Board

Sec. 1 The advisory board shall consist of nine members, elected for three-year terms expiring in rotation so that three places on the board are vacated each year.

Sec. 2 The duty of the advisory board shall be to advise the president and other officers in matters of policy and program.

### ARTICLE VI: Meetings

Sec. 1 Meetings shall be held twice annually, in the Spring and in the Fall, at such places and dates as shall be determined by the officers.

### ARTICLE VII: Dues

Sec. 1 No annual dues other than those assessed by the national association shall be charged for active membership in the New England Section.

Sec. 2 A fee of fifty cents shall be collected by the treasurer from members, both active and associate, attending each conference of the New England Section.

### ARTICLE VIII: Amendments

Sec. 1 This constitution may be amended at any business meeting by a majority vote of the members present.

Committee on Constitution: Donald T. Brodine, Tufts College, Chairman; Robert M. Gay, Simmons College; Harold W. Melvin, Northeastern University; F. Wylie Sypher, Simmons College.

Dear Editor,

You ask my judgment upon a problem which is being discussed among your members, as well as others: 'How best can the college English classroom contribute toward a 'training for democracy'?' Any answer that I attempted would be a repetition of paragraphs which have already appeared in an article in the New York Herald Tribune. You are at liberty to reprint them as my response to your request.

Sincerely,  
Walter Lippman

## On Being Too Current

By Walter Lippman

From Dr. Robey's remarks on his inquiry for the National Association of Manufacturers, it appears that all would be well with the study of the social sciences in high schools if only the textbooks were written in a spirit which he approved, expressed opinions which he thought were sound, and were done in what he would regard as a scholarly and competent manner. Thus Dr. Robey has precipitated a quarrel which is insoluble by rational discussion. For who is to decide whether Dr. Robey, on the one hand, or Dr. Rugg and the authors of some six hundred books, are the better judges of what is sound, proper, scholarly and competent?

But, worse than that, Dr. Robey's red herring throws us off the scent in seeking the solution to the real and difficult problem of how to prepare young people for judging the debatable issues of the world in which they are going to live. It is no solution of this educational problem to say that they should be taught Dr. Robey's hotly debated opinions about the world we now live in rather than, for example, Dr. Rugg's hotly debated opinions.

There are reasons for thinking, so at least it seems to me, that Dr. Robey and Dr. Rugg are the victims of the same educational fallacy, that, in Mr. Dooley's words, they are as far apart as the two poles and as much alike. For they assume that the way to prepare the young for the future is, as soon as they have just about learned to read and write, to furnish them views about the present. Is this assumption correct? If it is, we had better resign ourselves to an interminable struggle among parties, pressure groups and ideological sects for the control of the school curriculum. Instead of an education which transmits and perfects the culture of Western men, we shall have a new education every time there is a shift in the winds of political opinion. And we shall make the schools an arena in which the question to be decided is whether Dr. Robey's current doxy or Dr. Rugg's current doxy is to be the currently official orthodoxy.

Yet neither logic or experience justifies the assumption that a high school student will be prepared for his adult world by offering him the debatable opinions of the world in which we are adults. No one begins to study medicine by attempting to form an opinion on the curative

properties of insulin and sulfapyridin. There are too many other things in physiology and chemistry to be learned before the medical student can even begin to appreciate the problem, much less to reach a conclusion about it.

But somehow when it comes to educating the citizen, we of this generation have been persuaded to think we can run before we learn to walk, that we can begin our education at what is really the end of an education, that is to say, with views about the latest and obscurest issues of the contemporary world.

\* \*

Thus we have departed from the educational practice of 2,000 years and have fallen into the fallacy of supposing that the study of contemporary issues is the best education. Surely this is a fallacy. For nothing is so quickly out of date as a contemporary issue, and there is no ground for thinking that Dr. Robey's "sound views" or Dr. Rugg's "enlightened views" about the current controversies will be any more significant or pertinent twenty years hence than they were twenty years ago. This effort to be so contemporary, so current, so much up to the minute, so close to headlines, is dubious enough among journalistic commentators. Among educators it is a disease. It is a way of confusing the judgment of the young by inviting them to believe they can make judgments before they have learned the art of making judgments.

Only very recently has it come to be supposed that the way to prepare a student for the issues of his life is to begin by studying the issues that preoccupy his parents. The founders of the American Republic were extraordinarily well educated men: to compare their discussion of public questions with ours is not flattering to ourselves. In what textbooks did they study political science? Did the men who drafted the Constitution in Philadelphia in 1787 study textbooks dealing with the controversies of, say, 1760? Not at all. No such textbooks existed. Their political judgment was formed by the study of the classics of the ancient world and of the scholastic philosophy and of the history of the struggle for law by their ancestors in England during the seventeenth century. And so, though as children they probably did not hear in their school the latest views on the latest news, when they grew up to be responsible men their minds had been stocked with the experience and wisdom which remained after the smoke and dust of ancient controversies had been cleared away. Thus they could see through the smoke and dust of the contemporary controversies and could judge them in perspective.

## Freshman English

No reader of *The News Letter*, of *College English*, or of the mere list of textbooks pouring out from the publishing houses needs to be told of the confusion of objectives in freshman English. The April *News Letter* editorially distin-

guishes five fields in the study of English. Apparently many freshman courses plunge into them all. A healthy sign is the increasing tendency to get at the roots of the problem in composition and reading by attention to thinking. To mention but a little evidence: texts by Tenney, Euwema, Salisbury, Boatright: courses such as the freshman "Communications" at Stephens College; the urgings of I. A. Richards, Hutchins, Adler.

What are or should be the aims of freshman English? At Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, the aim is to increase the student's skill in reading, writing, and thinking. Content is subordinated to developing three essential skills: correct thinking, intelligent reading, effective writing. This clarifies objectives.

Should students who take a preliminary examination be excused from the course in Freshman English? Yes, if it is primarily devoted to grammar, punctuation, mechanics, of which the student may have a fair mastery. No, if it does not involve such repetition. Should those college students who have done well in football in high school be excused from football in college? Should those who have ability to write eschew writing courses? Not if the writing courses provide opportunity for that exercise of ability at one's highest level, without which any skill atrophies. Nor should the student who lacks even facility in expression be excused from a course in composition, for the gaining of mere facility by those who lack it is a justification of even objectively banal themes. Provided that the student is increasing in skill to the measure of his ability, it matters not that the teacher be diverted or entertained. To overlook this is to confuse the objectives in teaching composition. However, I agree with Mr. August H. Mason, writing in the February *News Letter*, that students, both good and poor, can be stimulated to better writing by such methods as derive from the *explication de texte*. We use Tenney's *Intelligent Reading*, which he commends, and Adler's *How to Read a Book*, for more often than it is frequently supposed, the means that help the good students also help the poor ones. This brings us back to the tri-unity of reading, writing, and thinking. It is reasonable, therefore, to combine a thorough course in logic with training in intelligent reading and effective writing.

Catholic colleges, at least, retain logic as a required subject. But taught apart from its integral relation to grammar and rhetoric, logic too frequently is as sterile as Milton alleged. It "comes alive" happily when re-vitalized by that intrinsic relation. Since I found no textbook emphasizing the relation of logic, grammar, and rhetoric, I wrote one: *The Trivium Integrated with College Composition* (Burgess, Minneapolis. *Everyday Logic* is an abridgment of this for logic classes.) This ties in nicely with Tenney and Adler.

Our students represent a very great range of ability and preparation, yet all follow the same course, which because of its flexibility ministers to the needs of each. Each in the measure of his skill, is bound to have something to say in autobiography. Some autobiographies are banal, some delightful. The same is true of short stories. But these and verse writing, (which is optional, but almost invariably chosen) increase appreciation in reading good stories and verse even in those who write poorly. The research paper represents a valuable technique in writing, the evidence of a more valuable experience in reading between one and two thousand pages on the subject chosen. Here in particular is there flexibility: one student finds Louise Alcott a challenge, while another does commendably with Arnold, Newman, Milton, or John Donne. There is individual guidance and direction for each. The greater part of the second semester is devoted to the reading on the research subject. Again, the freshman research paper does not enlighten the world of the teacher. It may be trite in the sense of nothing new to the reader, but so long as it represents on the part of the student a valid experience in reading, thinking, organizing, and writing, discovering and illustrating relationships new to him, however old they may be to his elders, it accomplishes its purpose. And some are really objectively excellent, as well.

Sister Miriam Joseph,  
St. Mary's College, Notre Dame

Members of CEA who happen to receive an extra copy of this issue of the *News Letter* are urged to pass it along to some colleague who is not a member and invite him to join the Association.

In planning your fall courses, don't forget the new text that provides all the necessary material for just \$2.60.

## A COMPLETE COURSE IN FRESHMAN ENGLISH

BY HARRY SHAW

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## Who and What Is The Composition Teacher?

I am concerned about two articles on the training of the composition teacher that have already appeared in the *News Letter*: one in the issue dated May, 1940, by Professor W. L. Warner, the other in the issue for February, 1941, by Professor George Baldwin Schick. The first is five short paragraphs entitled "What the Young Composition Teacher Should Know," and the second is written in response to the first.

Professor Werner declares that the Ph.D. degree is a disadvantage to the composition teacher, that instead of acquiring this degree, the young man who wishes to teach English writing in college would do better to read as much of the world's good literature as he can, take college courses in logic, philosophy, pedagogy, and language history and finally get some experience in writing by doing newspaper work and by writing for magazine publication. To these recommendations Professor Schick gives brief general assent and then contends rather lengthily that they are neither good nor practicable. He grants that graduate study in English is not designed primarily to train teachers of English composition, but he doubts that the college courses recommended by Professor Werner to take the place of the work usually prescribed for Ph.D. candidates would be adequate preparation for the teaching of college composition. At least I am willing to conjecture that this is approximately what he means when he writes: "The fundamental question here is whether these few

elementary or basic courses will give the student the power to synthesize, whether they will give him breadth and depth sufficient to develop for himself an intellectual outlook adequate to his needs and useful to him as human being and as teacher." He continues by speaking pessimistically of the voluntary reading program recommended by Professor Werner, and then makes at least one-third of his article a deprecation of the notion that the composition teacher should learn to write by doing newspaper and magazine work before he goes into the classroom to teach English writing. There is really more than deprecation here, unless I fail to read aright the sentence about dust for the students' eyes.

I believe Professor Werner was merely saying that the teacher of English composition should be an educated person, and at the same time a writer, a genuine writing writer, not the commoner one who only talks about the writing he means to do. To this I should like to add that he must also be a teacher. Education amounting to a certain degree of culture, writing skill, and the power to teach: these three are, I think, the abiding qualifications of the composition teacher. With the Professor's idea that Ph.D. degree unfits a person to be a teacher of composition, I do not agree; neither do I suppose that American doctors of philosophy are the only educated teachers in American colleges. I hardly see how this degree, probably the best one procurable anywhere in the world, now, could be detrimental though to any holder of it who is in any wise engaged in working with the English language and its literature, I think I may say, too, that not all possessors of it are equally educated and that a good many of them are neither teachers nor writers; but of course these conditions are not primarily explainable in terms of degrees possessed or not possessed.

It seems to me that Professor Werner has recommended one thing that is too obvious, and too good, and too true to be acceptable to a great many college teachers of composition, and that thing is: It takes a writer to do a good job of teaching writing just as it takes a painter to teach painting, just as it takes a musician to do a good job of teaching music. And I should like to say on this subject this one more thing: What the profession of composition teaching probably needs is something much more rare than another method, or a complete set of how-to-do-its: it needs persons who are both teachers and writers, and educated in the direction of culture, of course: writers who have learned to teach happily and effectively, and teachers who are genuinely interested in writing and who have written enough to find out what the writer's work is, and who thereafter continue to write as well as to teach because both these activities are proper and satisfying to them.

It is plain, I think, that I wish to endorse Professor Werner's

principal recommendation: that the teacher of writing learn to write and continue to do some writing after he becomes a teacher. I realize that the partisan of Professor Schick's point of view may contend that his objection is merely to the impracticability of getting newspaper experience as a part of composition-teacher training. I do not believe, however, that this is the true nature of his objection, partly because I think he must have seen as I have that young men, and young women, can work honorably for newspapers while they are in college, just after they leave college, and to some extent after they become teachers of college composition. So I am bound to say in conclusion that I consider Professor Schick's chief objection to Professor Werner's chief proposal a quibbling kind of criticism wherewith to reject one of the most sensible things that could be said about the training of the composition teacher. More than one piece of evidence might be brought forward to support the sensibleness of letting writers try to teach writing: I shall offer only Professor Theodore Morrison's article on this subject in the April, 1940 issue of this periodical. It is true, moreover, that many schools of good repute beside Harvard are beginning to call in, or have long since called in, writers to help do the work of teaching English composition.

August H. Mason,  
University of Alabama.

## "Slanting" English

"All teaching is by necessity an authoritarian tutelage."

"It is time" to slant "our work in a useful direction."

According to these statements in the April *News Letter* Professor Warfel would fight the totalitarians by adopting their avowed theory and practice. May I suggest different principles worded as follows?

The aim of teaching is to aid students in their search for truth.

Truth should not be "slanted." Facts as facts can be stated by authority, and opinions may be presented as opinions. But our trust is in the pertinent facts fairly presented, and in the good sense of the normal American student and citizen.

If our nation, our cause, and our way of life cannot hold their own in comparison with others, let us unite in improving them while defending them. If on the whole they do command our confidence and loyalty, we need fear no totalitarian tutelage.

Literature should be and can be one of our greatest national defenses. It throws light on injustices and weaknesses, thus hastening their removal. But chiefly it opens our eyes to "the large unconscious scenery" of our land, revives our memories of such men as "the sweetest, wisest soul" of all our days and lands, and projects our vision into the future of a just commonwealth in a tolerable world order.

William S. Ament,  
Scripps College, California.

Simpson and Nevins

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**English at the Naval Academy**

(Continued from Page 1)

desk in the Navy Department in Washington. Moreover the officer must deal with men under him, and not merely as a source of orders—an impersonal or almost mechanical voice of authority—he must be a leader as well, with a trained and practical imagination that will give him a sympathetic understanding of the men under him and that enables him thereby to fire them with that indefinable willingness to face death, if need be, to follow him—a quality we call *leadership* for lack of a better term.

It might therefore be said that our two-fold practical aim is the combination of exactness and leadership.

The means we employ to secure these ends are in part prescribed by the circumstances under which we work, in part by the general pattern of instruction that prevails at the Naval Academy (to which uniform adherence is desirable in so carefully organized a body as the Regiment of Midshipmen) and in part our own selection. As a midshipman's scholastic standing upon his graduation determines the order of his promotion for the rest of his career, grades mean much to every midshipman. He knows that he is going to receive a grade at practically every recitation and, conscious of the importance of his standing, he studies his lesson scrupulously every day. It is a rare experience indeed to find a midshipman who has not studied his assignment. Clearly this earnestness is a great help to the instructor.

The method of teaching is distinctive in certain ways. At all times the midshipmen are required to make intelligent progress on their own responsibility. In no way are they "nose-led or spoon-fed"; the purpose is constantly stressed that midshipmen should acquire the power to do things for themselves, for after their graduation their continued progress will depend upon their own initiative and ability. If we can develop their powers of independent accomplishment, we shall have given them the best possible equipment for their profession—the best promise of a successful future career. The instructor therefore endeavors to direct, to stimulate, to open up fields of thought, to suggest methods, to warn of errors or snares, to stimulate constructive and original thought—but the responsibility for making the most of these stimuli rests directly upon the midshipman. He knows this from the outset, and soon learns to progress in this way. At first he misses the worried anxiety his instructors in secondary schools have shown when he has not done very well; but he finds soon that the mood of the Naval Academy requires that each man "stand upon his own feet." Such a system matures midshipmen, it makes men of them, quite in accord with the practice of the Academy to place responsibility upon midshipmen increasingly and to expect them to deal with it properly.

The hours per week that midshipmen have in their study of English are relatively few. Other

departments are requested to report to the English Department any midshipmen whose work is conspicuously weak in the expression of their thought. In addition our department has charge also of courses in *Naval History, Government, Foreign Policy, Modern European History and Modern Thought*. (The full title of the Department is therefore the Department of English, History, and Government.) In all these courses midshipmen are required to maintain a high standard of excellence in English composition, with special emphasis upon the organization of the material upon which they recite, either orally or in writing. In their last year they have work in after-dinner speaking—very practically developed at real banquets, with guests attending from other departments or offices at the Naval Academy. Here they deliver speeches upon occasions as nearly actual as we can make them.

In addition, midshipmen have a survey course in literature in their first year at the Naval Academy. Though this course necessarily duplicates some of the work many midshipmen have had before they entered the Naval Academy, we try to give the work a new value by an effort to make them analyze the ideas in proper perspective. A small number who are demonstrably superior to the rest are given special work in wholly fresh material and are stimulated to produce more original and creative work than is demanded of the rest, whose bent, inasmuch as this is a technical institution, is likely to be less in the direction of poetic or imaginative matters—such as the short-story, for example. The select midshipmen in this upper section, therefore, are given an outlet for their tastes—and those who have no such inclinations are spared a pressure which is counter to their tastes and aptitudes, and which, at best, would produce work with the virtue of industry only to commend it.

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